

1833

DANIEL PRATT

LIFE SKETCHES

OF

GOVERNMENT OFFICERS

AND

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK

FOR 1874.

By W. H. MCELROY AND ALEX. MCBRIDE.

ALBANY:

WEED, PARSONS AND COMPANY, PRINTERS.

1874.

DANIEL PRATT,
ATTORNEY-GENERAL.

Hon. DANIEL PRATT, Attorney-General, was born in Washington county in 1806 — a county which gave birth to such well known men as Judges SAVAGE, COWAN, GRAY, PARKER, BACON and Judge NELSON of the Supreme Court of the United States. The parents of Judge PRATT were of New England origin, and in early life the mind of their son was imbued with the positive qualities and sturdy strength that characterized the descendants of the Pilgrims. Judge PRATT'S boyhood was passed in attending school in the winter, and working on his father's farm at other times. At school he easily led all the scholars, and was recognized as the brightest boy in all the region round. At the age of eighteen he taught a district school, and was looked upon by every one as a prodigy.

In early life he placed his mark high and determined to work his way up to it, unaided by any one. Entering Cambridge Academy, Washington county, at the age of twenty-one, he remained there fifteen months. In 1833, he entered the junior class of Union College — a class of which, it is interesting to note, WILLIAM CASSIDY, the late brilliant and accomplished editor of the *Argus*, was a member. So complete and thorough was his preparation that he found no difficulty in entering this advanced class. Mathematics and Greek were his favorite studies, and to these and the rest of his curriculum, he devoted twelve hours out of every twenty-four. He graduated in 1835, taking the highest honors in his class. Then the struggle with the world for fame really began. He determined to strike out into new fields, and journeyed to Memphis on a visit to an acquaintance. He remained there some time employed in teaching a select school, where he made the acquaintance of the late D. D.

Entered, according to act of Congress, in the year eighteen hundred and seventy-four,

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AND PUBLISHERS.

HILLS, at that time a lawyer in Camillus. Mr. HILLS was greatly impressed by the strength of mind and brilliant talents of his new acquaintance, and invited him to study law in his office.

Judge PRATT studied hard and determined to master the intricacies of his arduous profession, not content with merely grasping the rudiments. In 1836 he was admitted to practice in the Supreme Court. He removed with Mr. HILLS to Syracuse, and formed a copartnership with him. The firm at once took a front rank in a profession already overcrowded and adorned by leading minds. Their business relations continued until 1843.

Under the Constitution prior to 1846, the judges were appointed by the Governor and Senate, and in 1843, Governor WILLIAM C. BOUCK appointed DANIEL PRATT Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Onondaga county, a position he held until the Constitution of 1846 went into operation in the beginning of 1848. For four years he held this position, discharging his onerous duties with an impartiality, fairness and justice that won the admiration of the entire bar of the State. His opinions and decisions, officially promulgated, were characterized by sound judgment, practical common sense and eminent learning, which characteristics are the important elements of his character. The Constitution of 1846 divided the State into eight judicial districts, and the Democracy of the counties of Onondaga, Oneida, Oswego, Herkimer, Jefferson and Lewis, forming the Fifth Judicial District, nominated Mr. PRATT as one of their candidates for Supreme Court Judge. He was triumphantly elected, and discharged the duties so acceptably that he was renominated in 1851, and re-elected, serving until January, 1859. His career as a judge met the approval of all parties by reason of his impartiality, while his opinions on cases brought before him were considered among the ablest that issued from any judge on the bench of the State.

Upon his retirement from the bench, Judge PRATT formed

a partnership with D. J. MITCHELL, Esq., one of the most brilliant advocates in the State, and WILBER M. BROWN, an eminent office lawyer. The firm at once took a commanding position as one of the strongest in the State, and still continues. Judge PRATT was appointed by Governor HOFFMAN a member of the Constitutional Commission, where he at once took a leading position by his sound judgment, his great legal ability, and his eminent learning. His position in the profession is also shown by the fact that the Impeachment Committee of the Assembly of 1872 selected him as one of their counsel to conduct the celebrated trial of the notorious Judge BARNARD. In politics Judge PRATT has always been a Democrat and an unwavering supporter of the party.

Judge PRATT was elected to his present honorable and responsible position by a majority of 10,111 over BENJAMIN D. SILLIMAN. The *Syracuse Courier*, to whom we are indebted for many of the facts in the above sketch, in summing up a brief biographical notice of the present Attorney-General of the State, says:

Judge PRATT is a positive man whose clear and quick perceptions, sound judgment and practical common sense impress most forcibly all who come in contact with him. As a citizen he is universally esteemed and respected, while his charitable nature always displayed in an unostentatious manner has endeared him to those toward whom it has been exercised. As a lawyer, Judge PRATT occupies the front rank in the profession. Firm as a rock when battling for the right, his mind is unswayed by extraneous circumstances. His integrity is acknowledged by all, and not a breath of suspicion was ever raised by a political or legal foe. Judge PRATT is a Democrat of the Jeffersonian school. He is a Democrat from principle, and his wisdom and counsels are often consulted by party leaders. He will add dignity to the office.

CLASS OF 1833--Daniel Pratt--2

In the year 1838, he married Miss Maria, sister of S. B. Rowe, of Camillus, in which town she was born. To Mr. and Mrs. Pratt were born four sons, viz., William (drowned while young), George Comstock (died young), Charles and Daniel, the latter admitted to the practice of law and in the office with his father.

Mrs. Pratt was a most devoted Christian wife and mother,-- a friend of the poor, and foremost in all work for their relief and elevation. She was one of the first who founded the Onondaga Orphan Asylum and Syracuse Home which to-day bear testimony to her sagacity and disinterested benevolence. She died on the 11th of September, 1872, aged 66 years. For more than thirty years she had resided in the city of Syracuse, and had been for many years a communicant of the First Presbyterian Church.

FROM History of Onondaga County p. 212
(Portrait)
Prof. W. W. Clayton
D. Mason & Co.
Syracuse 1878.

R.....*DANIEL PRATT. 1832

Born in Greenwich, Washington Co., N. Y., 1806; Died July 20, 1884, at Syracuse, N. Y.

Entered from Argyle, N. Y. A. B. 1833; LL. D. 1864, and Hamilton 1859; Φ B. K.

Counsellor at Law. Admitted to the Bar July, 1837; practiced in Syracuse 1837-43 [partner of David D. Hillis, Σ Φ], and from Jan'y 1, 1860 until his death.

Judge Onondaga County Court Feb. 23, 1843-47; Judge Supreme Court of New York, June 7, 1847-60; Attorney General State of New York 1874-76; Member Constitutional Commission, New York, appointed by Gov. Hoffman, Σ Φ , 1872.

[Portrait and Biographic Sketch, Comley's Biographical Cyclopædia, p. 544.]

Σ Φ .
Cat. 1891

CLASS OF 1833

DANIEL PRATT

Was born in Greenwich, Washington Co., N. Y., in 1806. In 1833 he was graduated at Union College, and in the same year moved to Onondaga County, where he read law with David D. Hillis, Esq., at Camillus.

In the fall of 1836, he removed to Syracuse, where he has since resided. He was admitted to the bar in July, 1837, with Judge George F. Comstock and Hon. Charles B. Sedgwick and commenced the practice of his profession with David D. Hillis.

In February, 1843, he was appointed by Gov. Bouck First Judge of Onondaga County. Four years later he was elected Judge of the Supreme Court and was re-elected in 1851. At the close of the term for which he had been elected, he retired from the bench enjoying the unreserved confidence of the people he had served so long, both as to his unquestioned integrity and his judicial ability.

It is said of him while acting in the capacity of Judge of the Supreme Court he never in one instance adjourned the Court closing the term without clearing the calendar of all causes ready for trial. While upon the Bench, both Hamilton and Union Colleges conferred upon him the degree of LL. D.-- a fitting tribute to his legal attainments and to his private and public worth.

He resumed the practice of law January 1st, 1860, forming a partnership with the late David J. Mitchell, an advocate of surpassing persuasive powers. Two years later Mr. Wilber M. Brown was admitted to the partnership and the firm as then constituted for fifteen years ranked among the first in the State, having an unusually successful and lucrative practice.

Judge Pratt was elected one of the counsel to prosecute Judge Barnard in the impeachment of the latter, and the same year received the appointment from Gov. Hoffman as one of the Commissioners to revise the Constitution of the State. In 1873, he was elected Attorney-General (of the State), a position which he filled with distinction and honor.

The mind of Judge Pratt had been thoroughly disciplined in early life by study and reading and the mental training involved in his classical education and study of law gave him an ultimate mastery of his profession which placed him among the leading jurists of his time.

His genial disposition, strong intellectuality, and direct and positive argumentative powers strengthened and enforced by a fund of knowledge always at his command, made him very effective as an advocate, and won for him a large share of popular appreciation. Few public men stand higher in the confidence and esteem of their fellow citizens.

CLASS OF 1833

DANIEL PRATT

One of the most eminent men the town has ever produced was the Hon. Daniel Pratt, of Syracuse, who was born near McEachron's Lake, in the northwestern portion of the town in 1808. He graduated at Union College in 1833, and the same year moved to Onondaga County. He settled in Syracuse in 1836, and in the following year was admitted to the bar, and commenced the practice of law. In 1843 he was, by Gov. Bouck, appointed First Judge of Onondaga County. In 1847 he was elected Justice of the Supreme Court, and was re-elected in 1851, and held the office until 1859, when he resumed practice, which he continued until he was elected Attorney General in the fall of 1873. After the expiration of his term of office, he again resumed his practice in Syracuse, where he now lives.

FROM History of the Town of Greenwich, N. Y. p. 73
Elisha P. Thurston
Salem 1876

1833

Daniel Pratt

Sigma Phi

LL. D. Hamilton College, 1859.

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His second marriage, which took place on December 23rd, 1881, was with Mrs. Augusta M. Hurd of this city, a sister to the late E. B. Griswold of the Third Ward.

Judge Pratt leaves besides a wife and two sons, a brother, William C. Pratt, Ex-State Senator of California, who resides at Engle wood, N. J., and an elder sister, Mrs. Hannah Waist of Wisconsin. No man stood higher in the community than Judge Pratt. No man's character better served as an example or was more highly honored. Absolutley without guile he seldom suspected wrong doing by his fellow men. His nature was simple and his virtues were of a homely rugged character. His disposition was always kindly and his friendships were strong and pure. Judge Pratt was an exceedingly charitable man, ever ready to lend substantial aid to the deserving, and prompt to respond to the calls of the poor and needy. Many a poor person can testify to the kindness of this big-hearted man. As a lawyer and a jurist he occupied a very high rank. His decisions were accepted as sound law and were greatly valued by his profession. In the home circle Judge Pratt was especially endeared to every member. Supremely social in his disposition, he made his household always a congenial and happy one. Judge Pratt was indeed a marked man in the community and his death will be universally regretted.---Syracuse Daily Courier, July 24, 1884.

Washington County Obituaries Vol. 1 p. 119

Collection of newspaper obituaries in the
N. Y. State Library.

Pratt, Daniel, 1833 10/13/1854
"..has become a Judge, resides at Syracuse. When in college he was uncouth and unpromising in his appearance, but industry has overcome his early disadvantages."

Pearson Diaries V.4,p.704

DANIEL PRATT

The community was startled yesterday shortly after noon, by the announcement that the Hon. Daniel Pratt had died suddenly at his residence on Fayette Park. Judge Pratt had been in failing health for some time, and last month was confined to his house by a swollen knee. Of late, however, he had been able to receive carriage rides, and his condition was therefore not considered alarming until yesterday. Yesterday morning he dressed himself in order to go to the barbers and get shaved. He was attacked shortly after with dizziness, and his family physician, Dr. Dallas, was summoned. To the doctor, Judge Pratt said that he felt weak. Dr. Dallas helped him to undress and assisted him to his bed. Dr. Pease was called for consultation, and gave it as his opinion that Judge Pratt could not survive. Within an hour after retiring, he quietly breathed his last.

The cause of his death was embolism, or clot of the heart. His wife and his son, Charles, were present at the time of his death. His other son, Daniel, Jr., is with his family at Clayton.

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H. B.